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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3334
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTF HOA

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 000408

DEPT FOR AF A A/S CARTER, S/E GRATION, AF/SPG, AF/C
NSC FOR MGAVIN AND CHUDSON
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPKO](#) [ASEC](#) [AU](#) [UNSC](#) [SU](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT BASHIR RETHINKING ATTENDANCE AT ARAB LEAGUE
SUMMIT

REF: DOHA 177

11. (SBU) The GoS appears to be setting the stage for President Bashir to gracefully withdraw his participation at the March 30 Arab League Summit in Doha. Bashir earlier had stated publically that he planned to attend. However, pro-government press recently has been filled with commentary, urging Bashir not to go to Doha amidst reports that he might be apprehended under the arrest warrant issued against him by the International Criminal Court, including by his plane be diverted while enroute. On March 17, the Egyptian DCM told emboffs that Qatar had failed to provide full assurances that Bashir would be safe from arrest, and that he was having doubts about attending.

12. (U) On March 21, the pro-regime Islamic Sudan Scholars Authority issued a Fatwa requesting the President not to travel to the Arab League Summit. In the statement, they explained the dangerous present situation and said that Sudan's enemies plan to create chaos inside the country. They requested the President to accept the advice of the nation and not travel, saying that another GOS official could represent Sudan and that it is not necessary for Bashir to attend the summit personally. Pro-regime media have joined the echo chamber, clamoring that the President is too important to leave the country given the current situation.

13. (SBU) Sudanese businessmen close to the regime recently described to CDA Fernandez the contradictory and volatile pressures the regime is under. A proud and moody Bashir wants to show that he is fully in charge of events and unbowed by the ICC. Important to his personal image as a brave military man, he deeply wants to travel and graphically demonstrate his immunity. Because of this personal volatility, the ruling NCP is having trouble "managing" Sudan's multiple crises with their usual ruthless efficiency. They described an NCP inner circle nervous about the future, afraid to correct the President and perhaps also plotting to "set him up" by actually encouraging aggressive and irrational behavior by a head of state now wanted by the International Criminal Court. They also described the drama of the President's possible travel to Qatar as an entirely regime-managed stage play.

14. (SBU) Comment: While public concerns that Bashir might be apprehended and turned over to the ICC either on the way to or at Doha probably are grossly exaggerated, his presence there could make him the focus of potentially embarrassing attention. The growing chorus of pro-government voices, most authoritatively stated by the Islamic scholars Fatwa, provides the regime with a convenient excuse to avoid such embarrassment. It is also still another opportunity for Sudan's increasingly obsequious political class to underscore their slavish public loyalty to an embattled President Bashir, something which has now seemed to become a weekly occurrence in Sudan.

